

## MAKE LITFINDER WORK FOR YOU!

by Marian Corya  
&  
David Dyer



What do you do when a patron requests a copy of “I am a Mede and Persian” by Robert Frost and your only copy of his *Collected Poems, Prose and Plays* is checked out? Turn to *LitFINDER*!

*LitFINDER* is a database with extensive literary content, divided into five modules: Poems, Stories, Essays, Speeches, and Plays. It is available as part of the INSPIRE package of databases and was recently acquired by Gale. This recent acquisition may result in changes in the database in the future.

Following are some other examples highlighting content that is available using *LitFINDER*. If you need a copy of Poe’s “Lenore,” you can print the text from the database, or look for it in one of the seven resources listed in which the poem appears. This is a nice feature, especially if you do not have a copy of *Granger’s Index to Poetry* in your library. If a patron requests a copy of a poem remembered from childhood, and all he can remember is its first line: “One misty, moisty morning,” try an advanced search in *LitFINDER* to retrieve the full text of this nursery rhyme. If students have an assignment to read an American short story from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, use the timeline feature in Advanced Search to create a list of possibilities. If students need to read a famous speech, Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech is available in full, as are all the presidential inaugural addresses from George Washington to George W. Bush.

If the content of the database is its major selling point, why create a user guide for *LitFINDER*? We feel it is being underused at our library and probably at other libraries as well. The database does provide a basic online HELP page which will serve to get you started, however we feel providing search guidelines, additional details, and tips for using the database will be helpful. We invite you to pull up a chair and a computer and prepare to explore *LitFINDER* with us.

For the purpose of this article, text in bold type will indicate a button or link to be clicked, search terms will be underlined, and exact phrases will be double quoted and underlined.

To access *LitFINDER* from your library, go to the INSPIRE website: [www.inspire.net](http://www.inspire.net). Click **Search the**

**INSPIRE databases** and then, scrolling down if necessary, click ***LitFINDER***. Most of the following will be easier to understand if you are able to have *LitFINDER* open as you read.

### **LITFINDER CONTENT**

#### **AVAILABLE MODULES**

The tabs (Poems, Stories, etc.) along the top of the screen on the *LitFINDER* home page will take you to pages that provide details about the particular module. Once there, you may browse or perform a Basic Search. The Advanced Search feature is not available from that page. To perform an Advanced Search on that module, return to the *LitFINDER* home page by clicking **home** or the ***LitFINDER* logo** at the top of the screen.

**Poems - *LitFINDER*** includes over 125,000 full-text poems and over 850,000 poem citations and excerpts. Detailed explanations of nearly 1,000 poems provide in-depth analysis. Biographical and critical essays of the poets are provided. This module is updated continuously.

**Stories - *LitFINDER*** provides over 5,000 full-text short stories plus explanations, biographies and pictures. This module is updated continuously with classic and contemporary stories.

**Essays - Full-text essays and critical writing are included, based on books published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The essays focus on the humanities and social sciences, and include biographies and literary criticism.**

**Speeches - Text for the best-known speeches from the past 2,500 years is provided.**

**Plays - Over 1,000 complete plays are included in *LitFINDER*. Plays are analyzed for subject and also list all characters. This module is updated periodically.**

### **TYPES OF RECORDS**

Several types of records are available in the *LitFINDER* database. The most common are Author and Literature records. To see a sample Author Record, type Nathaniel Hawthorne (or [nathaniel hawthorne](#), search is not case sensitive) into the Basic Search box and

press the **Enter** key or click the red box with chevrons just to the right of the search box. Then click **Nathaniel Hawthorne** in the author column of the search results. Author records begin with brief biographical information which may include a picture, birth and death years, nationality, religion, profession, and pseudonym. Some authors will also have a more extended biographical essay. Links to the works included in the database by this author are available on the menu bar just below the brief biographical information. In addition to a link for each type of literary work (poems, essays, etc.), there is a **View All** link that will enable you to see every work for that author included in the database.

Literature records include a wide variety of information. To see a sample Literature Record, type Samuel Clemens into the Basic Search box and put a check in the Speeches box below. Press **Enter**. Notice the gold T icon indicating full-text, and click **New England Weather**. The Literature Record begins with the brief biographical information contained in the Author Record and then continues with the title, timeline, date, subject headings, etc. of the literary work. Poetry records without full-text may have first and last lines listed. Most records will conclude with a Reference notation, which links to the full Reference Record.

The Reference Record provides publication information as well as a list of the literary items appearing in a particular work. To see an example of a Reference Record, type Longfellow village blacksmith in the Basic Search box on the *LitFINDER* homepage and click in the box next to Poems. Press **Enter**. Click **The Village Blacksmith**. Note that in the record for "The Village Blacksmith," there is also a link to an "Explanation." Scroll to the end of the poem text and click **Selected Poems**. Currently, there are nearly 1000 "Explanations" or short critical essays in *LitFINDER*. A link to all the "Explanations" in the database can be found on the homepage under the "Browse" heading.

Also on the home page, under the link **Exploring Poetry**, there are a number of articles that provide extended critical essays on various types of poetry ranging from British poetry in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to Native American poetry. The articles will also occasionally include suggested activities and creative writing exercises.

## USING *LITFINDER*

### BROWSING

*LitFINDER* allows browsing by topic and by module. The topic browse returns results from all of the modules based on the selected topics, whereas the module browse, i.e. Poetry, Essay, etc., displays only material from the selected module. It is important to note that the topic browse is only available from the home page. The module browse can be found either in

the left hand column on the home page or under the respective tabs at the top of the home page. The module browse has four additional components – Authors, Explanations, "Glossary of Terms," and "Exploring Poetry" – which, while attached to selected records throughout the rest of the database, may only be browsed as a whole in this one location. Refining plays a large role in the browsing process.

### REFINING A BROWSE

To begin a browse for poems, either click **Poems** in the left hand margin or click the **Poems tab** at the top of the screen and then click **Browse**. This will take you to the basic browse screen. The results are listed in alphabetical order by the author's last name in the center of the screen. In the left-hand column are the refinement options. If searching for children's poetry, further options can be obtained by clicking **Children's Literature** under the "By Genre" heading in the left margin. Note that new subheadings appear under this heading. Choose **Children's Poetry** to further refine the search.

You could stop at any of these steps if you were satisfied with the results, but the list is still long; therefore, you may want continue to refine your browse by choosing to look for poetry by **African Americans**. You will notice that as you browse, the available options in the left margin change. The last refinement will be to click **Full Text**.

It is important to note there is more than one way to find any particular item. For the example search, you could have begun with African American poetry, then selected full text, and finally made the choice for children's poetry and the results list would be the same.

Another feature of the database is the "breadcrumb" navigation at the top of the page showing each choice made in the refining process. (*LitFINDER* online Help calls this the "refinement tree.") A breadcrumb trail is generally displayed at the top of the page in a small font and is designed with two purposes in mind. First, the breadcrumbs provide information about where you are on the larger site, and second, they provide a quick way to backtrack without having to use the Back button or any other navigation tools. (Rogers & Chaparro, 2003) If you change your mind about one of your earlier choices, you can click on one of the previous steps to start at that point, rather than starting your search from the beginning. One difficulty with this feature in *LitFINDER* is that it is not carried over to the final record display. Once you are looking at a particular record you will need to use the **Back** button to make any changes, since the breadcrumb trail will disappear.

### KEYWORD SEARCHING – BASIC SEARCH

You may start a Basic Search using keywords from the *LitFINDER* home page by entering search terms into

the search box under BASIC SEARCH. You may limit your search to one or more types of literature by clicking in the box next to the desired material.

For example, if you want to find poems about the American Civil War, you could type “American Civil War” into the Basic Search box and place a check in the Poems box. It is not necessary to use a Boolean “AND” since the database defaults to an “AND” search. Use double quotes to search your terms as a phrase.

Note that the database does not perform an exact match search by default. As a result, a Basic Search for the keyword **chest**, will result in a list of hits that may include such words as “richest” and “orchestra.”

## RESULTS LIST

Each item on the results list consists of two parts: author information and title of the work. If the search term appears in either the work or the author information, the work will appear in the results list. For example, in the previous search for poems about the American Civil War, that phrase is in the author biographical material for Ambrose Bierce. Therefore, all the poems by Bierce are on the results list, even though the poems are not all about the American Civil War.

A similar problem arises if you want to find the text of the poem “Lenore” by Poe by using Lenore Poe as your search terms and checking the box next to Poems. If you click **View all poem matches**, you will see a list of poems by Poe with Lenore near the bottom of the first page. “Lenore” is mentioned in the author information, so all of the poems by Poe appear on the results list. Compare by using the search terms Irene Poe. This poem title does not appear in the author biography and the results list is short. This is not a problem when using the Advanced Search because the field of the record you want to search is specified. A search for Lenore in the “Record Title” field of the Advanced Search results in a much smaller list of ten matches.

The results list is ranked by relevancy, which means the items with the most instances of the search terms will be at the top of the list. Remember that material in the author biography may count as an “instance.”

Search terms are supposed to be highlighted in the results, but as of this writing, this is not always the case. It is sometimes necessary to use the “Find in this page” feature in your browser to locate search terms.

## REFINING YOUR RESULTS

The process for refining results when using keyword searching is exactly the same as when browsing. The refinement options are presented in the left-hand column and each choice from this list will reduce and focus the results list.

## REFINING NOTES

While the process of refining a search is fairly straightforward, there are some peculiarities that should be mentioned. First, it is not clear, when clicking on a subject heading link, whether or not there are additional subject headings. For example, in the earlier browse for children’s poetry, clicking on **Children’s Literature** revealed a list of additional subheadings for various types of children’s poetry. Unfortunately, from the top level subject headings, there is no way to determine whether subheadings are available, and, when subheadings are displayed, the appearance (font, size, etc.) is the same as that of the top level headings.

Second, there is a limit on the number of subheadings that will be displayed in the left-hand column. Once that number is exceeded, the display switches to a full page listing of subheadings. For example, in the earlier search for children’s poems, clicking on the **more** link under “By Subject” switches to the full page listing, whereas clicking on **more** under “By Timeline,” the list is displayed right there on the page. It helps that the breadcrumb trail does remain at the top of the page. From the full page listing, clicking on one of the subject headings usually returns you to the more common display.

“By Contemporary” is another of the available search refinements. To view an example, click **Poems** under “Browse.” Scroll down. Choosing **Contemporary** will limit the results list to materials that are still under copyright.

## ADVANCED SEARCH

The advanced search can be accessed from the *LitFINDER* home page and is recommended for more precise searching. Three modules of the database can be searched separately: Literature, Author, and References (the name of the publication in which a work appeared). There is also the option to search all of the modules of the database at once.

“Record Title” simply means title. If you are in the Literature Module, it means the title of the poem or essay, etc. If you are in the References Module, it means the title of the anthology or other publication in which the work appeared.

## ADVANCED SEARCH IN “LITERATURE”

The Literature component can be used to search for particular poems, speeches, etc. by a number of different options when you do not have a complete citation. Searching the Literature component is straightforward and allows for more precision than the Basic Search. If you wish to see works about education written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, type education in the



Keyword search box, and click the drop down menu under Timeline to select **18<sup>th</sup> century**. Click **Go**. If you wish, you may refine your search further by clicking on terms from the list at the left of your results screen. (See also: Refining Your Results.)

The most interesting feature of this module is the timeline option. You may wish to explore the various time periods to get an idea of the content of the database for each. Select a time period of your choice, be sure “Type” is set to **All** and leave all the other search boxes blank. Then click **Go** to see what the database contains for a given time period. (Please note that there appear to be some errors in the timeline, primarily in the eras marked “B.C.”)

### ADVANCED SEARCH IN “AUTHOR”

Search the Author component in the same way as the Literature component. Here, there are two additional limiters: gender and religion. Try a sample search for **Zen Buddhist** authors by selecting that religion from the drop down menu and clicking **Go**. Refine the search by gender by clicking on **male** from the list at the left. Now click **calligrapher** under profession to find authors with that profession. Click on one of the names to view the record for that author.

### ADVANCED SEARCH IN “REFERENCES”

The Reference component allows you to search for particular anthologies or author collections. To view a list of anthologies or collected works by a specific author, type the name of the author you wish to search for in the author search box (the database will accommodate last name or first name first) and click **Go**. Click on the name of the collected work or anthology to see the list of works contained in it.

In References, the Record Title is the name of an anthology, periodical or other publication in which a literary work appeared. For example, to see citations for all the works in the database that were originally published in *New Yorker*, type *New Yorker* into the search box for Record Title and click **Go**.

### ADVANCED SEARCH IN “ALL”

The “All” component allows you to perform a search with all of the previously mentioned Advanced Search options. Click the drop down menu to see the variety of choices that can be used in searching the entire database. There are some additional search options available here. For instance, you can search for Mark Twain as a pseudonym which is not possible using an Author search. “Works Text” will search for keywords from the text that are typed into the search box.

To search for Haiku, sonnets, odes, limericks or other poetic forms, select **poetic form** from the drop down menu. To find a list of possible poetic forms that can be searched, click **Poetic Forms** under “Genre” on the *LitFINDER* home page.

The Advanced Search page also allows for a search for works by genre. Begin by selecting **works genre** from the drop down menu in the “All” component. Such terms as westerns, romance, humor, nursery rhymes, etc. may be used as search terms when **works genre** is selected. It is possible to find additional terms for use in the genre search by clicking on terms under “By Genre” on the *LitFINDER* homepage. The resulting terms are usable as search terms. Note that browsing is probably easier unless you already know the genre search terms you want to use.

To search by Timeline, simply use one of the terms from the Timeline drop down menu in the literature or author modules and type it into the search box next to the drop down menu where Timeline has been selected

Boolean search operators are available in this module.

### LITFINDER VERSIONS

According to the *LitFINDER* online help, there are two versions of the database: a Public/Academic version and a K-12 version. In the Public/Academic version, there is a “T” before the title of a work when full-text coverage is available. Also, there is a Kids’ Korner, which provides access by subject. The K-12 version of *LitFINDER* includes only literature that is available full-text. The essay section is called “Criticism and Biographies.” There may be some libraries with their own subscription to the K-12 version, however this searching guide is based on the Public/Academic version accessible through INSPIRE.

It is important to note there is more than one way to find any particular item. For the example search, you could have begun with African American poetry, then selected full text, and finally made the choice for children’s poetry and the results list would be the same.

### GENRE/SUBJECT/KIDS KORNER SEARCHING

The genre, subject, and Kids Korner lists on the *LitFINDER* home page are lists of broad categories. For example, to find a list of westerns, you must first click on **fiction** under “genre.” To find a list of works about the Civil War, first click on **history**, then on **revolutions and civil wars**.

Using Kids Korner, it is possible to browse for works about special days, food, family, etc., and to retrieve a list of works on that topic. Most of the works in Kids Korner are poems, but there are also some plays (especially for the major holidays), and a category for Stories & Songs.

## PRINTING

Look for “Print Text” on the record. When you click on this, a new window will open with a printer-friendly format.

## CONCLUSION

*LitFINDER* is a valuable resource that is available through INSPIRE and can supplement the print literature collection of any library. Use it as an index to search for citations or full-text literary works, to find works when only part of the text is known, or to browse for something interesting to read or perform. It is hoped this introduction to *LitFINDER* will encourage you to use the database and be of help when the inevitable “stumper” is the order of the day!

## LITFINDER EXERCISE

Check your *LitFINDER* searching skills by trying this exercise.

1. Find the text of Harry Truman’s inaugural address.
2. Find the famous poem about Paul Revere’s Ride.
3. Using the browse feature, find a list of non-fiction essays by an American writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
4. Find the funny story about a frog by Mark Twain.
5. Look for a list of stories about frontier life.
6. Browse for essays about the American Civil War.
7. Find a play about Halloween.
8. Find a poem by Edward Lear with the last line: “They danced by the light of the moon.”
9. Find a 19<sup>th</sup> century essay on spelling reform.
10. Find children’s poems about grasshoppers.

## HINTS

There may be more than one way to find answers to the above questions. Here are some suggestions for searching.

1. One way to find this is to type “Harry Truman” into the Basic Search box and select Speeches.
2. An easy way to find this poem is to use the Advanced Search and simply type the title in the Record Title box. Look for the gold “T” to ensure retrieval of full-text. In the Basic Search, even searching by using double quotes around the title does not help, since the title happens to be mentioned in the author record. The results list will include every poem by Longfellow in the database.
3. One way to generate this list is to begin on the home page by clicking **Essays**. Click **American** and then click **19<sup>th</sup> century**.
4. *LitFINDER* does not recognize Mark Twain as being an author; therefore, he needs to be searched

under Samuel Clemens or under Mark Twain as a pseudonym. Since this story is mentioned in the author biographical material, all the stories by Samuel Clemens will appear in the results list if Basic Search is used. Try searching in the Advanced Search using Clemens in the author search box and frog in the Keyword search box. Select **stories** from the drop-down menu under Type. Alternatively, use the Advanced Search “All” component to search for Mark Twain as a pseudonym and type frog into a second search box using **works text** from the drop down menu.

5. A list can be generated by clicking **History** under “Subject” on the home page, then clicking **Frontier and Pioneer Life**. Then click **Stories** from the list at the left under “Refine Results.”
6. Click Essays at the left. Click **more** at the bottom of the visible part of the subject list. Scroll down and click **History**. Click **more** at the bottom of the subject list again. Click **revolutions and civil wars**. Click **American Civil War**.
7. Using Kids Korner, click on **Special Days**. On the next page, click on **Halloween**. From the list at the left, click **Plays**.
8. Use a phrase search in the Basic Search box for the term “they danced by the light of the moon.” There may be times when it is necessary to use the Advanced Search. For example, if the search terms happen to appear in the author biography, use the “All” component, select **works last line** from the drop down menu, and type the terms into the search box.
9. Type spelling reform into the Basic Search box, select **essays** and press **Enter**. Click **19<sup>th</sup> century**. To find this essay by browsing, click **Essays** from the Browse menu at the left. Click **19<sup>th</sup> century**, and then click **more** at the bottom of the list of subjects. Scroll down until the subject **spelling reform** appears and click it.
10. Click **Animals** under “Kids Korner.” Then click **Grasshoppers** to retrieve a list. Note that only one of these is full-text.

## REFERENCES

Rogers, B.L. and Chaparro, B. (2003) “Breadcrumb Navigation: Further Investigation of Usage.” *Usability News*, 5.2. Retrieved September 15, 2004, from <http://psychology.wichita.edu/surl/usabilitynews/52/breadcrumb.htm>

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Marian Corya ([mcorya@carmel.lib.in.us](mailto:mcorya@carmel.lib.in.us)) and David Dyer ([ddyer@carmel.lib.in.us](mailto:ddyer@carmel.lib.in.us)) are Reference Librarians at Carmel Clay Public Library.